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**1961/02/07**

7 February 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

- (26) SUBJECT 9122 Meeting on Cuba  
(26) PLACE 9122 Office of Mr. Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State  
(26) PARTICIPANTS?

- (27) Mr. Adolph A. Berle, Chief of Department of State Latin American Task Force  
Mr. Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State  
55 (24) Mr. William Bundy, Department of Defense  
Mr. Hayden Williams, Department of Defense  
Gen. Gray, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
Mr. Wymberley Coerr, Department of State  
(24) Amb. Achilles, Counsellor of Department of State  
Mr. Richard Goodwin, White House Staff  
Mr. Richard Russell, CIA  
Mr. Tracy Barnes, CIA  
57 (24) Col. J. C. King, CIA

— [name not declassified] —

- (11) Mr. Berle chaired the meeting. The meeting lasted three hours - from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. The following topics were discussed:

(14) NAVAL BLOCKADE

- (11) Mr. Berle indicated that he had given considerable thought to the establishment of a naval blockade of Cuba as a weapon against the Castro regime. The matter of a naval blockade was then discussed. The Defense representative, Mr. Williams, reported that a blockade of Cuba was physically feasible. Such a blockade, to be effective, would require the stopping, boarding and searching of all vessels destined to Cuba, regardless of flag. The opinion was expressed by Mr. Williams that the Soviet Government would consider such treatment of its vessels as an act of war. He also stated that unless Cuba committed a unilateral aggression against the United States, the blockade of Cuban ports would in itself be considered an act of war and would violate two treaties to which we are a signator, including the Rio Treaty. Other aspects of a blockade were discussed, and Mr. Berle concluded that a blockade of ingress would create more problems for us than it would solve. It was agreed that search and seizure tactics could be employed against shipping from Cuba at non-Cuban ports of call and especially in Western Hemisphere ports where local arrangements could be set up without any particular difficulty or risk.

(14) RADAR SURVEILLANCE

- (11) The possibility of detecting non-scheduled air flights from Cuba which

might be directed at other American states, principally Venezuela, was discussed. Although radar coverage under certain circumstances might be fairly effective, it was the opinion of CINCLANT authorities that the chances of detecting non-scheduled Cuban flights would be - at best - one in ten. It was agreed that the best protection for places such as Venezuela or Colombia would be the erection of fixed radar intercept facilities in these countries to guard against surprise attacks. It was noted that radar coverage by CINCLANT would not be effective against aircraft flying at altitudes of less than 500 feet.

10 66 THE AGENCY PLAN

- 11 The Agency Plan and the JCS evaluation thereof were also discussed. While the soundness of the plan itself was at no time questioned, a number of questions were raised. Would any American citizens be included in the landing party? Answer negative. However, Americans would accompany the ships and be involved in the landing exercise. Would any American citizens be involved in the air strike? Answer, probably some American flyers under contract, but the great majority would be Cubans. The possibility of civilian casualties resulting from the air strike was raised. Gen. Gray thought the chances minimal since the targets were easily identifiable and away from civilian populations. Mr. Bissell said every effort would be made to minimize the risk, but no guarantee could be made that some civilians employed at the targets would not be killed or injured.
- 12 Considerable interest was evinced by both Mr. Harn and Mr. Perle on the possibility of the strike force reaching the safety of the mountains in the event they found themselves in an untenable position at the beachhead. Gen. Gray indicated he was confident that the strike force would be able to hold the beachhead at least six days before Castro would be in a position to throw any sizable group of army or militia units against the strike force. Since defensible mountain terrain is within only a few miles of the landing site, Gen. Gray was confident that the main body of the landing party could retreat to the mountains and maintain themselves there indefinitely. Later he also expressed the belief that the strike force could break through any encirclement that Castro might throw around the mountain area under consideration and make its way to the beach in the event an evacuation by sea should be required. The target site was not specifically identified during the discussion and Mr. Barle admitted to all concerned that he did not know and did not wish to know its exact location.
- 13 The question was raised as to the probable popular reaction to a landing of the nature contemplated. Col. King reported that our best information indicates that the civilian population and campesinos would probably be friendly to the invasion force, as they currently are to the guerrillas who have been operating in the hills. He added that intelligence also discloses that there is widespread dissatisfaction among field workers, who have been taken from their labors to serve in the militia, and that the morale of the militia itself is low, with many defections daily re-

57 reported. Gen. Gray remarked that the combat effectiveness of the army was low, and that of the militia considerably lower. One reason for the low effectiveness of the army is absence of training in larger units. That to defend his long coast line Castro has had to spread his army thin, and that through the use of deception tactics he could be kept off balance on D-Day. However, Gen. Gray did question the wisdom of knocking-out certain bridges in the target area on D-Day since one, since he fears that this may provide Castro with a tip-off as to the actual landing site, although he admitted that it would probably be three or four days anyway before Castro could get any sizable force of troops with equipment to the area. In a later discussion of the possible world reaction to the air strike and landing party, Mr. Berle said that from time immemorial Cuba has experienced invasions from the sea. However, the simultaneous bombing of a number of Cuban targets from the air was another matter and one that could not be shrugged off. Although he did not pursue this line of thought, there appears to be no doubt that it is causing him some concern. The possibility of fixing up the location of the bases from which the planes operate through the use of deception devices was briefly discussed. In this connection the question of how far we can go to protect, or support, SPINOLA and YDIGORAS was lightly touched on by Mr. Mann and Mr. Farnes, with Mr. Barnes stating that while no specific commitment has been made, we have indicated that we "would back them" in the event they are charged with intervention. Mr. Mann concurred that they should be backed.

#### (66) POLICY APPROVAL

(8) Mr. Berle stated that he would like, if possible, to lay before the Secretary and the President a proposal for action which has our unanimous agreement. However, he said if there is any difference or differences which cannot be resolved, it then would be necessary to take both points of view to the Secretary and to the President for their consideration. He then identified what he feels are the three broad courses of action open to us:

- (16) 1. Drifting, with no military action by organized Cuban or American forces
- (16) 2. Agency plan
- (16) 3. Massive intervention  $\frac{T}{m}$  war.

(11) He then enumerated his reasons for favoring the agency plan, which he referred to as the intermediate possibility. These points were:

- (16) 1. The question of time. We cannot delay or drift. If we do, we will soon find Castro with a large military capability which can only be reduced by war.
- (16) 2. It would take a long time and a lot of work before we could effectively prevent Castro from exporting his revolution to

other areas of the Caribbean. The implementation of the agency plan would give Castro things to preoccupy himself with at home and minimize the chance of his embarking on any foreign adventures.

16 3. We do not have to presume <sup>(1)</sup> if the agency plan is implemented <sup>(1)</sup> that U.S. forces will have <sup>(1)</sup> to be committed, since there is expert opinion that the strike force can find safe haven in the mountains and maintain itself there indefinitely.

16 4. There is intelligence that the invading force would attract popular support of the people of Cuba at this time. This may not be true some months later when Castro will have tightened his grip on the island.

16 5. And on moral grounds, since the risk of loss of life would be less with this proposal than with any other course.

11 In supporting Mr. Berle's contention that we cannot afford to wait, mention was made of the present training in Czechoslovakia of some 60 to 107 Cuban pilots in jet aircraft and the possibility that these pilots may complete their training in March of this year. No one questioned the fact that the acquisition of a jet capability by Castro would greatly alter the picture in his favor.

11 With the exception of Mr. Mann there appeared to be general agreement with Mr. Berle's summing up of the situation and the conclusion he arrived at. Specifically, Mr. Mann would not accept the premise that we do not have to presume commitment of U.S. forces as a follow-up to the landing of the strike force. He contended that once we permitted the strike force to land, we (the United States Government) were then committed; that the United States Government would have to underwrite the success of the venture even if it meant the employment of U.S. naval and military forces. This being the case it was essential, in his opinion, that we first take certain diplomatic action <sup>(1)</sup> specifically <sup>(1)</sup> consult with a number of other Latin American nations, in order to beef up our moral position in the eyes of the hemisphere before we embark on this adventure. He then outlined his "thesis" as follows:

11 1. He and other State Department officials (he suggested Mr. Berle might visit Brazil) would contact the presidents and foreign ministers of a number of important South American countries (Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and perhaps others) and consult with them on the problem of Cuba. Hopefully, they would share our view that Castro is a menace to the peace of the hemisphere and that positive action <sup>(1)</sup> preferably under OAS sponsorship <sup>(1)</sup> should be taken. If they are unwilling to go along with multilateral intervention within the framework of the OAS, perhaps they will be willing to break with Castro and recognize the Junta

when it surfaces itself in Cuba. If they are unwilling to take any action against Castro, then at least they will not be able to say <sup>as</sup> they did in connection with the recent protective blockade of Guatemala and Nicaraguan coasts <sup>that</sup> we did not consult them. Without specifically stating <sup>what</sup> we are planning to do, we would at least acquaint them with the fact that we were not going to permit Castro to menace the peace of the hemisphere, etc. Since anyone who knows how to read already knows that the United States is supporting training bases in Guatemala and financing revolutionary groups in the United States, there will be no doubt in the minds of these leaders as to the type of action we have in mind.

- 16 2. However, if a number of countries would break with Castro and recognise the Junta, this would open the way to legal intervention <sup>and</sup> would prepare public opinion at home and abroad <sup>and</sup> give us a defensible position in the U.S. The use of armed forces and the supplying of arms to the Junta would then be possible with some degree of legality.
- 16 3. Mr. Mann indicated that it would take at least six weeks to complete these consultations, and consequently if his "thesis" is adopted, the landing of the strike force cannot take place prior to 31 March 1961 at the earliest.
- 11 Once the selected countries had been sounded out <sup>and</sup> regardless of whether their reaction is favorable or unfavorable <sup>Mr. Mann visualized the following sequence of events:</sup>
- 16 A. Consultation with other American countries <sup>time, six weeks.</sup>
- 16 B. Members of a Junta enter Cuba clandestinely and from Cuban territory announce the establishment of a provisional government and request recognition of the United States and all Latin American nations. It would also request the support of all Cuban patriots at home and abroad.
- 16 C. In answer to this appeal the strike force would land and endeavor to carry out its mission of establishing a beachhead and increasing its real estate until Castro is finally overthrown.
- 16 D. The United States will recognize the Junta and endeavor to get other OAS states to do likewise.
- 16 E. If the strike force appears to be in danger of annihilation, the United States, preferably in concert with other OAS countries but unilaterally if necessary, will take whatever steps may be necessary to guarantee victory, and this in all probability will require the use of United States armed forces.

(11) Mr. Berle then tried to get Mr. Mann to admit to the possibility or the probability that the strike force would not be annihilated but would, if faced with the necessity, be able to make its way to the mountains and to maintain itself there indefinitely <sup>2</sup> which is the opinion of our military experts. Assuming all this, Mr. Mann was asked whether he still insisted that prior commitment to employ the United States armed forces was necessary. Mr. Mann said that he would not agree to the landing of the strike force unless it was first agreed as policy that the United States Government was prepared to go all the way to insure victory.

(11) Mr. Barnes then stated that he felt it was necessary to point out that the threat to the peace of the hemisphere now exists and that it is increasing, and that if we delay in taking action until later, we shall lose an immediate capability of dealing with the problem, namely, our strike force. He pointed out that pressure is building up, we are already losing recruits through the AMOL channel, that these men have been in training for six months, and that we had originally contemplated their going into action as early as last November; that we could not keep the lid on much longer.

(11) At this juncture Mr. Bissell stated that he wanted it clearly understood that the agency could not and would not guarantee that it could get any member of the Junta into Cuba prior to the landing of the strike force.

(11) MR. BISSER'S COUNTER PROPOSAL

(11) Mr. Berle then outlined another possible course of action which would achieve a certain measure of legality <sup>1</sup> and thus satisfy Mr. Mann's requirement of a defensible position in the U.N., etc. <sup>1</sup> and still permit us to proceed with the project. In broad outline his proposal is as follows:

- (11) 1. To prepare public opinion and to put the hemisphere on notice as to the serious view the United States takes of the Castro menace, the United States Government would withdraw recognition of the Castro government. In other words, we would go one step further than a mere break of relations. We would publicly declare that the Castro regime is not recognized by the United States as the government of Cuba.
- (11) 2. Immediately thereafter a revolutionary group "seeking to be the government of Cuba" would be surfaced. This group would publicize a program of action which would promise elections, individual liberties, etc., which the former Castro government had failed to provide, and we would "recognize" this group as a revolutionary group "seeking to be the government."
- (11) 3. We would use our influence with other Latin American countries to also de-recognize Castro and to "recognize" the revolutionary group.

- (11) 4. The strike force would go in, the revolutionary group would send its representatives in and form a revolutionary junta, and civil war would become widespread on the island.
- (11) 5. We would then take the initiative in calling the OAS into session and we would demand action under the OAS charter and the appropriate treaties which would restore peace in Cuba through armed military intervention. We would go to this meeting prepared to prove that Castro is a menace to peace, that his regime has become dominated by an extra-continental totalitarian power, namely the Soviet Union, and we would demand that the OAS take the action open to it and required of it by its treaty obligations.
- (11) 6. If the other OAS nations jointly refuse to face up to their responsibilities and either take no action whatsoever, or stall, or attempt to mediate the Cuban problem as a problem between the United States and Cuba, then we shall make it clear to the OAS that we consider the OAS ineffectual as an organization and that in order to live up to our responsibilities under the treaties and the Monroe Document, we have no recourse but to take unilateral military action to remove this menace to hemispheric peace and re-establish peace on the island.

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(11) CONCLUSION

- (11) Mr. Berle announced that since differences of opinion still existed as to what course of action should be recommended to the Secretary and the President, it would be necessary for him and Mr. Mann to take their differences to the Secretary for consideration. Mr. Goodwin then remarked that the President had made it quite clear that if there were unresolved differences of opinion on the Cuban problem, the persons concerned should come to the President's office and in his presence orally set forth their arguments for his consideration and eventual decision.
- (11) Mr. Berle thought they would be able to discuss the matter with the Secretary this afternoon and possibly with the President this evening. 4 ✓
- (11) Mr. Barnes brought up the question of training some 25 Cubans in the operation of M tanks at stateside army installations and asked that authority be given to the appropriate officials of the Defense Department in order that this needed training could take place at the earliest possible date. Although no one posed any serious objections to the training of these Cubans in an American army installation, there was some uncertainty as to exactly who could authorize this. Someone said that perhaps the Secretary of State should send a letter to the Secretary of Defense but the question seemed to be left hanging, although it is most probable that Gen. Gray and the Defense officials attending may have considered Mr. Berle's and Mr. Mann's concurrence as sufficient authority on which to proceed. 5 ✓  
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